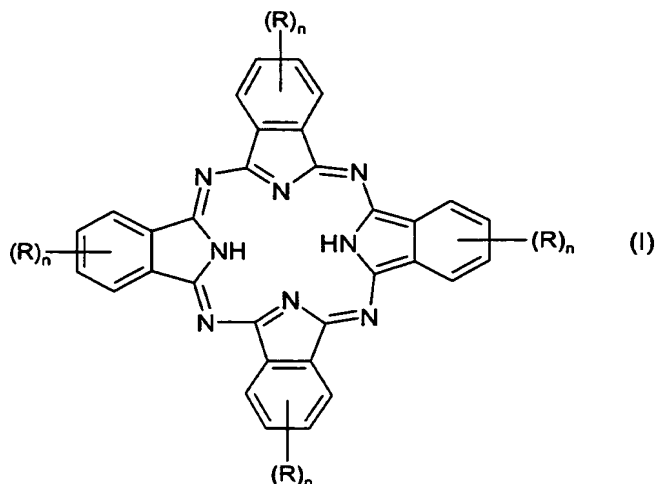


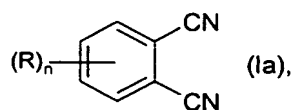
We claim:-

1. A process for the preparation of metal-free phthalocyanines of the formula I



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by conversion of an ortho-phthalodinitrile of the formula Ia



- 10 in an inert solvent with a boiling point of at least 120°C (at standard pressure) in the presence of ammonia,

in which, in formula I or Ia, the variable n can adopt values of 1, 2, 3 or 4 and the R radicals denote a five- or six-membered saturated nitrogen-comprising heterocyclic ring optionally substituted by one or two C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>8</sub>-alkyl groups which is bonded via a ring nitrogen atom to the benzene ring and which can still comprise one or two additional nitrogen atoms or an additional oxygen or sulfur atom,

which comprises carrying out the conversion in the presence of an alkali metal hydroxide or alkali metal carbonate.

2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the inert solvent is chosen from the group consisting of ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene glycol, 1,2-butanediol, 1,3-butanediol, 1,4-butanediol, 2,3-butanediol, the mono- and di(C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub>-alkyl) ethers of the abovementioned diols, 2-[di(C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub>-alkyl)amino]ethanol

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and 3-[di(C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub>-alkyl)amino]propanol.

3. The process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein 3-dimethylaminopropanol or n-butyl glycol is used as inert solvent.
- 5 4. The process according to one or more of the preceding claims, wherein sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, sodium carbonate or potassium carbonate are used as alkali metal hydroxide or alkali metal carbonate.
- 10 5. The process according to one or more of the preceding claims, wherein n in the formulae I and Ia adopts the value 1.
- 15 6. The process according to one or more of the preceding claims, wherein the R radicals denote a six-membered saturated nitrogen-comprising heterocyclic ring substituted by one or two C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub>-alkyl groups which is bonded via a ring nitrogen atom to the benzene ring and which can still comprise an additional nitrogen atom.
- 20 7. The process according to one or more of the preceding claims, wherein the R radicals denote a piperidine or piperazine ring substituted by one or two C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub>-alkyl groups which is bonded via the ring nitrogen atom or one of the two ring nitrogen atoms to the benzene ring.